

# **U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management**

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**Categorical Exclusion DOI-BLM-NV-S010-2014-0089-CX  
May 2014**

## **Notice of Competitive Auction for Solar Energy Development on Public Lands in the State of Nevada**

**Categorical Exclusion**

PREPARING OFFICE  
**U.S. Bureau of Land Management**  
**Southern Nevada District Office**  
Las Vegas Field Office  
4701 North Torrey Pines Drive  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89130



### **BLM Mission Statement**

*It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*





## 1.0 BACKGROUND

The BLM and the Department of Energy (DOE) completed a joint Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) in July 2012 for solar energy development on the public lands. On October 12, 2012, Secretary Salazar signed a Record of Decision (ROD) that identified locations on BLM-managed public lands that are most suitable for solar energy development. These areas are characterized by excellent solar resources, access to existing or planned transmission, and relatively low conflict with biological, cultural and historic resources. The ROD amended 89 Resource Management Plans, including the 1998 Las Vegas Resource Management Plan. In Nevada, the ROD amended 15 land use plans either to allow or exclude utility-scale solar development. Five Solar Energy Zones (SEZs) totaling 60,395 acres were identified that are well suited for utility-scale production of solar energy in Nevada.

On March 17, 2014, the BLM published a notice seeking public interest for solar energy development in the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone. By the April 15, 2014, deadline, the BLM received nine letters of interest and/or preliminary applications and numerous email/telephone inquiries about the notice. Based on the competitive interest, BLM Southern Nevada District Office is moving ahead with a competitive auction for six parcels within the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone.

BLM regulations at §43 CFR 2804.23 authorize the BLM to determine whether competition exists among ROW applications filed for the same facility or system. The regulations also allow the BLM to resolve any such competition by using competitive bidding procedures.

**BLM Office:** Las Vegas Field Office

**Lease/Serial/Case File Number:** N/A

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Notice of competitive auction for solar energy development on public lands in Nevada.

**Location of the Proposed Action:** Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone; approximately 15 miles northeast of Las Vegas, Nevada.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Southern Nevada District Office will accept competitive bids to select preferred applicants to submit right-of-way (ROW) applications and plans of development for solar energy projects on up to approximately 3,083 acres of public land in Clark County, Nevada. The public lands made available by this notice include six parcels in the Dry Lake SEZ, approximately 15 miles northeast of Las Vegas, Nevada. The successful bidder(s) will become the preferred ROW applicant and must submit a ROW application and plan of development to the BLM within 180 calendar days of notification of the results of the oral auction. The notice is to inform potentially interested parties of the oral auction and sealed bidding process; it does not result in the issuance of a ROW authorization.

The competitive bid process is considered a procedural process and is thusly categorically excluded because it is "of an administrative, financial, legal, technical, or procedural nature; or whose environmental effects are too broad, speculative, or conjectural to lend themselves to meaningful analysis and will later be subject to the NEPA process, either collectively or case-by-case." 43 CFR 46.210(i).

### **3.0 LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE**

**Land Use Plan Name:**

Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (LVRMP)

**Date Approved/Amended:**

October 5, 1998/October 12, 2012

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): Record of Decision for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States.

## COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11 (1.10). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply:

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

No.

2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

No.

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].

No.

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

No.

5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

No.

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

No.

7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.

No.

8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts in designated Critical Habitat for these species.

No.

9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

No.



10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

No.

11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

No.

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

No.

## 4.0 APPROVAL AND CONTACT INFORMATION

I have reviewed this Categorical Exclusion and have decided to implement the Proposed Action. This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

Authorizing Official:

  
(Signature)

5/20/2014  
(Date)

**Gayle Marrs-Smith**

**Field Manager**

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